Are the riders coming? Through the dark? (part one)

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by Zigzagwanderer

Summary

Will and Hannibal are living on their Baltic, archipelagic (no, my friends, I will never tire of that word) home. They are living in their pseudonyms of Thom and Eirik Buckley, but, there are, obviously, issues. Apologies to those not already in the Vakkrehejm 'verse. It is hard to explain all that has gone before. I honestly do not mean to exclude anyone. Because, we're all fannibals-right?xxxxxx Comes before 'Dreams are like Water'.

It is a god-damned *stupid* idea.

The evening is too cold, in the end; there is a sapphire edge to it, a mean, mineral opulence, all salt and stone beneath blue-white, unblinking stars. They cannot sit outside, for the sky would cut them into brilliants, into briolettes, so Will blows out the lamps and slowly closes the patio doors behind him.

It is not even *his* god-damned stupid idea.

Ernesta had foisted a cobwebbed box of grimy crockery onto Will a week ago, wreckage of a failed marriage, washed up onto a forgotten shelf at the back of the chandlery; and so it began.

"After the way you carried on at the last public advisory meeting, you should be thankful that respectable folk still give you priceless antiques," she scolded him. "I mean, in a *store-cupboard*, Thom. Men of your years. Anyone would think it was your wedding anniversary," she leers. "Next time, when your diary shows a red circle, just make him a nice dinner."

Will glares down at the ill-omened rubbish in his arms, then back up at Ernesta, balanced on a step-ladder that is as scrawny as she is rickety. He should really put the wicked old troll out of her misery, he thinks.

But there is a little grey stag leaping along the edge of the plates and bowls.
It is calligraphic against the parchment colour of the china.
There is savagery and joy in the sparse brush-strokes that make up the creature and its patterning trees.

Will likes it.
He knows that Hannibal would *love* it.

So, next is the discovery that Will has clothing he knows nothing about.
Sandy brings Hannibal gifts. Will finds these tributes amusing, given that they are almost exclusively decomposing sea-life.

"Possibly he finds the different olfactory signature of such decay worthy of my attention." Hannibal has to empty his wardrobe completely in order to scrub out the stench. "He is, after all, a desert animal, used to desiccation rather than putrefaction."
The balcony windows are propped open as wide as they will go. Will sends a smile out to sea. "Your dog leaves a rotting flipper amongst your good shoes and that's all you have to say?"
"I requested that he refrain, using a stern tone of voice." Hannibal straightens up after applying his own bespoke cleaning solution. "And, really, Will, you may recall that I am quite practiced at disposing of unwanted organic matter."

While Hannibal is doing just that, Will sees two suits in covers, waiting to be rehung. He has not seen these before, although he has pried and poked about, indulging an echoing, fearful

curiosity, on any and all occasions.

The tailor is Florentine. Sharp shears and long, silver pins prickle and cut at Will's heart. His fingers sting as he breaks the seal.

He does not want Hannibal to want the past, the paisley and plaid. He does not want Hannibal to remember her waves of polished gold, breaking prettily against her old-world brocades.
Monsters should not dream of waltzing under chandeliers, Will's heart stutters and pleads, they should be content to shuffle about to sad songs on stormy nights with those that *love* them.

Will tears the first cotton cocoon open, then the second.
He expects skull-winged moths to fly out, biting. He expects a motley of stitched-together nostalgias, a patchwork of decadences to lie there mocking him, he who cannot give Hannibal the gilded things he misses most.

But what Will finds beneath his hands are simply two, very fine, very plain suits. Suits that very possibly cost as much as the house, if not the entire island.

And one of the pair is very clearly in Will's measurements.

The rest of the enterprise has an arrhythmic momentum of its own, after that.
If Hannibal had, for years, built baroque and meticulous compositions, Machiavellian symphonies of contingency and deception, both intimate and universal, agenda counterpoint to an arrogant playfulness, then, in comparison, Will's plans for one surprise supper are free-form, and fraught with nagging discord.
It is, after all, *a god-damned stupid idea*.

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